

Oil Refinery

Business Challenge/Environment

Our client sought to entitle 3,000 acres for a state-of-the-art energy center including a refinery, power plant, water processing facility, and tank farm. Discreet land acquisition became public, causing rampant speculation about a massive and mysterious project. Negative media coverage, and community fear and hostility followed. Over 400 residents quickly organized to stop the mystery project, which needed zoning approvals from the county planning commission and board of commissioners. A countywide referendum on any approvals was inevitable.

Outcome

We won the planning commission vote, 4-1; the county board of commissioners vote, 5-0; and the referendum by 58% to 42%, ensuring our client's critical land entitlement.

Our Approach

We immediately went to work to develop an announcement strategy that included a press conference, an informational website and meetings with elected officials. We developed a comprehensive campaign that:

- Built an active community group run by local residents and business people.
- Conducted a door-to-door canvass of the entire county, ultimately canvassed the entire county more than five times.
- Implemented an information campaign that included 12 mail pieces, over 20 paid advertisements and tens of thousands of phone calls.
- Deployed an innovative 'kiosk' approach to community meetings featuring nine separate presentations citizens could experience at individual tables.
- Built a campaign database of more than 9,000 county residents including over 6,400 identified supporters.
- Sought and won nine supportive city council resolutions as well as endorsements from three counties, all of the area Chambers of Commerce and many other key endorsements.
- Turned out more than 300 supporters to the planning commission hearing, over 500 supporters to county board of commissioners hearing, and 250 supporters to the board's vote.
- Ran an aggressive referendum campaign that turned out record numbers of voters to the polls.

CASE STUDY